

Please do not grant BellSouth's petition to deregulate the telephone companies' support for third-party DSL/Internet Service Providers. Independent ISPs are crucial to the competitive development of that industry; without them, we'd still be on 128 kb ISDN. And even though the phone companies now seem to match the independents' offerings on paper, they have proven incapable of providing knowledgeable and responsive service to consumers. We absolutely need the alternative provided by the independents, and they depend in turn on access to "last-mile" cables and switches owned by the telephone monopolies.